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ENIWETOK

An AEC survey team visited Eniwetok Atoll during May 11-17, 1972, to conduct a preliminary radiological survey toward developing a more detailed survey program to be conducted this fall in anticipation of decontaminating and rehabilitating the Atoll prior to return to its original owners. Simultaneous with the AEC survey team visit, the Defense Nuclear Agency (DNA) was making preparations for a series of high explosive cratering experiments.

Complex radiological conditions exist on Runit Island (Yvonne), Eniwetok Atoll, due to several nuclear devices exploded on Runit from 1951 through 1958 and subsequent earth and debris moving activities. The historical records of operations on Runit contain some contradictions with respect to radioactive waste disposal, although several alpha waste burial grounds are known to exist in the Atoll.

The AEC's preliminary radiological survey has located a plutonium bearing sand layer outcropping on the ocean side of the Runit mid-island area and, similarly, the apparent existence of plutonium fragments and grains on the Island surface. The areas containing these surface plutonium contaminations are not yet clearly delineated but appear to be extensive. Further, contaminated scrap metal debris is located throughout the Island.

On May 17, Mr. Roger Ray, Assistant Manager for Operations, NV, arrived at Eniwetok with a group of Eniwetokese council members and their lawyer, being escorted by Trust Territory officials. The AEC survey team briefed Mr. Ray on their findings and their concern about the possibility of high alpha contamination on Runit Island. Mr. Ray then briefed a team of arriving workers from Scripps Institute and DNA's

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Pacific Cratering Experiment (PACE) personnel on the preliminary findings of the AEC survey team. DNA/PACE decided to continue their work on Runit in preparation for their high explosive excavation experiments while the Scripps Institute personnel decided to leave the Atoll. The AEC survey team advised the DNA/PACE personnel that they did not consider PACE radiological precautions as adequate.

On returning to Kwajalein on May 20, Mr. Ray sent a message to Air Force authorities recommending that Runit Island be quarantined. This recommendation was based upon the fact that the road between the dock and the PACE work areas passes directly through the highly contaminated area and that trucks and other earthmoving equipment were transiting the contaminated areas and were being taken off Runit Island to other islands. His recommendation indicated the need for cessation of all operations and traffic to Runit Island until adequate survey and decontamination procedures could be established to prevent further aggravation through dispersion of contamination to other islands and/or shipping facilities.

The analysis of several fragments collected by the AEC survey team is now underway at LLL and should be available within the next week. Other environmental samples collected by the team will require several weeks for analysis.

The Micronesian visitors were not informed of this contamination problem.

DNA has advised AEC that the PACE work on Runit has been discontinued and the Island is under quarantine. General Carroll H. Dunn, Director, DNA, has indicated to General Giller that their immediate plans are to send a DNA radiological survey team to Runit Island, with appropriate AEC technical assistance, to conduct a detailed survey of the PACE work areas. The results of their survey will be used to determine the feasibility of conducting the PACE experiment as planned, or with appropriate precautions or the necessity of selecting another site.

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY  
MARTIN B. BILES

Martin B. Biles, Director  
Division of Operational Safety

/// bcc: General Manager (2)  
→ Maj. Gen. E. B. Giller, USAF, AGMMA  
J. H. Rubin, AGMES  
SECY (2)

Contact: L. Joe Deal, xt. 4093

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